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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Letter dated 8 April 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to present herewith the formal position paper of the Group of 77, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields", for the resumed forty-fifth session of the General Assembly (29 April-3 May 1991), as called for by the Assembly in its resolution 45/177 of 19 December 1990 (see annex).

In order to facilitate consultations prior to the resumed session, we would appreciate the circulation of the present letter and its annex as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 117.

In this connection, we would request the convening of informal consultations on the basis of this paper as soon as possible.

(Signed) Ambassador Kofi Nyidevu AWOONOR
Permanent Representative of
Ghana to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group of 77
New York

ANNEX

Formal position paper of the Group of 77, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields", issued in New York on 8 April 1991

Overall objective

1. The overall objective of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields is defined in resolution 45/177 adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 1990. In paragraph 3 of the resolution the Assembly "stresses the need for more effective and efficient functioning of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields in order to be more responsive to the needs of enhancing international economic cooperation and promoting the development of the developing countries".

2. The above objective needs to be addressed through a concerted, deliberate and continuing process of restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. It would, therefore, be appropriate to define clearly the specific targets for the resumed session of the General Assembly in April this year.

3. In this context, the principal aim of the United Nations activities in the economic and social sectors is the revitalization of economic growth and development of developing countries. Greater attention needs to be given to the economic, social and humanitarian problems in these countries through sustained development, strength and stability in the world economy, sound macroeconomic management and a decisive strengthening of international development cooperation, bearing in mind the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, including resolution S-18/3, containing the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the developing countries and resolution 45/199 containing the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade.

Basic principles

4. The deliberations and decisions of the restructuring process, including those of the resumed session, should be predicated on the following principles in order to ensure a successful outcome:

(a) Restructuring is essentially an intergovernmental responsibility and needs to be pursued in this context.

(b) The present restructuring exercise should be confined to the parameters set forth in General Assembly resolution 45/177. Other efforts in this direction which touch upon the economic and social sectors of the United

Nations need to be defined in the light of and adjusted to the mandate of resolution 45/177.

(c) Political will is an essential prerequisite for enhancing international cooperation. The socio-economic goals of the United Nations will remain unachievable in the absence of the requisite political will.

(d) The current restructuring and revitalization process should not attempt to redefine the objectives or to alter the priorities of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields as set forth in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

(e) The restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields should aim at achieving greater complementarity between the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and organs of the United Nations with the General Assembly, while ensuring the latter's position as the supreme organ of the United Nations.

(f) Restructuring and revitalization should enhance the democratic norm, which underpins the decision-making process of the United Nations.

(g) Transparency and openness need to be preserved and strengthened in the functioning of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields.

(h) Restructuring and revitalization should be cost neutral.

(i) The ongoing process of revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of all its relevant resolutions, remains valid.

(j) The necessity for an enlargement of the membership of the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical representation and the aspiration of each Member State of the United Nations to be a member of the Economic and Social Council, should be recognized.

(k) A more efficient and effective Economic and Social Council would determine the nature of the restructuring and revitalization of the subsidiary intergovernmental machinery.

Goals for the resumed forty-fifth session of the General Assembly

5. The reconvened session needs to be seen as a step in the process of restructuring and revitalization. The session should focus on the basic principles of the process and on the role and functioning of the Economic and Social Council in order to enable it to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations by enhancing its role as the central forum for major social and economic issues and policies and its coordinating functions relating to the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields; by improving its effectiveness and efficiency in the consideration of and action on the reports of its subsidiary bodies; by

ensuring greater complementarity with the work of the General Assembly; by avoiding duplication with the General Assembly; and by following an integrated approach to policy and programme aspects of the economic and social issues.

Proposals for the restructuring and revitalization of the Economic and Social Council

6. In order to achieve the goals enumerated above, the Group of 77 makes the following proposals:

(a) The continued implementation of Economic and Social Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, as appropriate.

(b) An organizational session of five days' duration to be held in February/March to determine the annual agenda of the Council and related organizational issues, taking into account the relevant provisions of resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, particularly on the multi-year work programme and the rationalization and simplification of its agenda. Elections and appointments to take place during the organizational session.

(c) One substantive session not to exceed five or six weeks to take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in June/July.

(d) The session to be broadly organized, sequentially, along the following lines:

Plenary

(i) A one-week high-level segment open to all Member States, with ministerial participation, devoted to the consideration of one major economic and one major social policy theme to be determined in accordance with the Economic and Social Council biennial work programme at the organizational session; adequate secretariat preparation, including, in particular, one comprehensive background document for each theme; debate to follow an integrated and interdisciplinary approach; heads of the relevant organizations, agencies and other organs to participate actively.

The deliberations of the high-level segment would provide political impetus for building areas of convergence and facilitating the emergence of new recommendations on the issues in question in the relevant forums.

The main features of the deliberations of the high-level segment would be presented to the Council in the form of a summary by the President, which would be incorporated in its final report.

(ii) Segment devoted to the coordination of the specialized agencies, organs and organizations of the United Nations system to be attended by their heads on themes previously agreed upon at the organizational session, specifically for this segment. A specific portion of the segment to be devoted to discussion and dialogue with the heads of multilateral financial and trade institutions.

(iii) Segment devoted to operational activities of the United Nations system focusing, in particular, on follow-up of policy recommendations and decisions of the General Assembly and coordination of operational activities on a system-wide basis. The triennial review would continue to be undertaken by the General Assembly.

Committee segment

(iv) Consideration of specific economic and social issues, including their programme implications, in two separate committees meeting simultaneously to consider and take decisions on the reports of the subsidiary bodies and other relevant reports; discussions to be decision-oriented focusing on the specific recommendations and issues; review and appraisal of the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly in the economic and social fields; reports of the committees to be submitted to the plenary for approval.

(v) Adoption of the final report.

(e) In order to avoid duplication of debate, the General Assembly may decide to request that certain reports from subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council be submitted directly to the Assembly for consideration and decision.

(f) Readjustment of the current membership of the Economic and Social Council in order to ensure equitable geographical representation.

(g) The above proposals will come into effect in 1992. As part of the restructuring and revitalization process, the implementation of these proposals will be reviewed at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly with a view to enhancing the impact and effectiveness of the restructuring and revitalization of the Economic and Social Council.

Issues to be addressed in the future

Subsidiary intergovernmental machinery of the Economic and Social Council

7. In pursuance of principle (b), the following criteria, inter alia, would be followed in addressing the issue of the restructuring and revitalization of the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council in the future:

(a) Ensuring that programme delivery of a subsidiary body meets the needs of Member States and that it is consistent with the goals and priorities of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

(b) Application of the same general principles and criteria for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council.

(c) Avoidance of subsuming highly technical functions of subsidiary bodies and expert groups into the Economic and Social Council.

(d) Ensuring that recommendations of expert bodies on specific issues form an input into and not a substitute for the consideration and decisions by intergovernmental bodies on these issues.

(e) The Economic and Social Council on an agreed schedule, would review the task being performed by its subsidiary bodies and present its recommendations to the General Assembly suggesting concrete measures for the avoidance of duplication amongst these bodies.

Secretariat

The Secretariat structure to be reviewed in the light of the outcome of the restructuring process.

Membership of the Economic and Social Council

The process of the restructuring and revitalization of the Economic and Social Council shall include a review of its size with a view to enlarging the membership, keeping in mind the principle of equitable geographical representation and the desirability of ensuring more effective and broader participation in the deliberations of the Council.

8. The principles and proposals elaborated above are to be seen in conjunction with the positions that have been adopted by the Group of 77 and are intended to facilitate the process of restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economc and social fields.